



August 29, 2016

Elaine Wynn, Chair SBOE  
Steve Canavero, State Superintendent

This comment will sound much like our public comment from July. NMA involvement and frustration with Nevada's K-12 systems goes back about two and a half decades. Nevada schools have made significant progress in many areas, but as the ACT scores analysis of the 2016 graduates released last week indicate, we still need considerable progress. Our involvement started with employer frustration in trying to hire entry level employees and finding reading, math and problem solving skills marginal or worse.

The nature of manufacturing jobs has changed much in the last 25 years - everywhere. The basics we wanted years ago are now necessities, plus we want computer skills and increasingly industry recognized, third party reviewed, stackable, national credentials and certifications in an increasingly larger percentages in our workplaces for many of the products made in Nevada. The pressure to have a competitive US manufacturing sector will steadily increase the need for higher skills forever.

The Manufacturing sector council of DETR endorsed several programs starting with the ACT's Workkeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC). In our view, the NCRC is the fundamental building block for all students. It has a proven record and is a totally nondiscriminatory testing of the base line skills required in the workplace.

Late last week word came out the 17 district superintendents were united in pressing for wider use of the NCRC and what we heard was the school districts wanted to make the decision which students took which test. That is a red flag warning which prompts this comment. Having all students take the NCRC and then encouraging those who do well on that to take the ACT makes some sense. Ideally all students will seek work at some point in their lives, so the NCRC is applicable for all students. The ACT is not since our college going rate is low and the production of college bound students is a multiple year effort. The analysis for the 2016 class and the 2017 scores sends a clear message we are not there yet.

Allowing the districts to decide which students take which test might not be legal if based on course work or some other criteria. The CTE students throughout this state have among the highest percentage going to post-secondary programs of some type. Sending them to the NCRC instead of the ACT would be nearly criminal in my view.

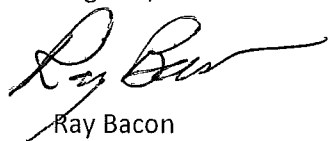
Having them do both is OK, if it is considered for all students. The tests are different and look at different skills. Creating the bridge between the two is not easy.

The ACT student reports provided to the class of 2017 this year have an ESTIMATED career readiness section showing the 50% probability of the NCRC score - Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum (roughly mid page left column). Last week, we requested the ACT rep for Nevada to get the data for the other direction, if possible. What is the likely range of ACT test score for student who have taken the NCRC in another state and ultimately wound up taking both test. The correlation between the two tests should be the same whether it is based on our students or those in other states provided the sample is reasonably large. We don't expect it will be a single number but likely a range with some sort of bell curve probability. Using that data could be a profession, data drive way to make the decision which student who have taken the NCRC (assuming you decide to test all with the NCRC) should take the ACT probably in the fall of their senior year at state expense.

There are other factors in making this decision. The NCRC results are available within minutes, so it could be taken later in the junior year, probably improving our results. Those who should take the ACT in the fall could be identified within a few days using the data. We suggested to the ACT rep that we need to NCRC to ACT profile for each of the three NCRC tests and not just the cumulative score. The results received last week (Page 7 Table 1.1) show only 11% of our 2016 class students are truly college ready. The "progress toward career readiness based on ACT composite score" (Page 19 Table 3.4) show there is a 50% chance that 45% will likely score at the Gold Level and 33% at the Silver level or higher. In today's employment world, I believe that means we have about 22% who are not "career ready" and that should be a major concern. If we are serious about helping those with the highest need, I believe this data driven approach would be a huge step forward. Those students doing poorly on the NCRC would have the ability to pay the fee and take the ACT in the fall of their senior year.

The approach we propose closes no doors to any student and we think it probably opens doors for many. We have new and better career tools to align students to careers matching their profile and every profile has a growth path. I know you cannot take action at this meeting on this issue, but believe you need to have this on your next agenda. As always, I am willing to assist in anyway.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ray Bacon", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Ray Bacon